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#GRATITUDE

thank you

It's the psychology buzzword of the moment. It has been linked to lower anxiety and stress levels, increased optimism and sounder sleep. Not bad for two little words. Saying thank you has become a daily practice as we pursue greater happiness and wellbeing, PENNY HARRISON reports

SHINY, HAPPY PEOPLE

Clinical psychologist Dr Lauren Tober says gratitude is a fun and effective way to tap into our "own innate sense of happiness".

"It's free, it takes no time at all, it increases the more you share it and the results are impressive," she says.

Lauren cites a series of gratitude studies with results including greater happiness, fewer symptoms of physical illness, better sleep and increased optimism.

Lauren is the founder of Capturing Gratitude, a worldwide photographic happiness project. "We take photographs of things we're grateful for and share them online," she says. "It helps to pause throughout the day and contemplate the things I'm grateful for."

OH SO GRATEFUL

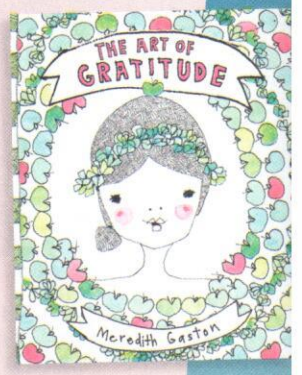
Artist and author Meredith Gaston turned gratitude into a daily practice when recovering from illness. "I became more interested in counting my blessings to help keep me positive," she recalls.

Having practised mindfulness and gratitude each day for the past 10 years, Meredith has written and illustrated a book on the subject, *The Art of Gratitude* (Penguin, $24.99).

"People are world weary and need loving energy in their lives," Meredith explains. "Practising gratitude provides a shift in consciousness that's nothing short of life-changing."

Meredith says her routine includes writing in a gratitude journal at the start and end of each day. She takes time out to focus on what she has in life and to express love and gratitude to those around her.

Yoga, meditation and positive affirmations also play a huge role in the process. "It's about being thankful for our lives, our bodies, for all that we are and all we have," Meredith says. "The happier we are, the healthier and more vital we feel."



'IT'S ABOUT BEING THANKFUL FOR OUR LIVES, OUR BODIES, FOR ALL THAT WE ARE AND ALL WE HAVE.'

Meredith Gaston

KEEP THE FAITH

Singer/songwriter Toni Childs is a great believer in the power of gratitude, having turned to it during her battle with the auto-immune thyroid disorder, Graves' disease, more than 15 years ago.

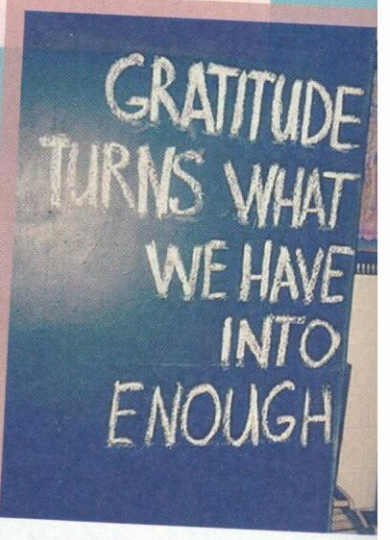
The Emmy winner and Grammy-nominated recording artist was at the height of her career when she was struck down with the rare stress disorder. She withdrew from the music scene and moved to the Hawaiian island of Kauai.

"Physically, I was falling apart. So I went into a beautiful rabbit hole to try to heal myself," she says.

Toni says she spent every morning practising yoga, meditation and gratitude.

"I feel disease comes from a lack of self love, so part of my daily process was giving thanks to every single part of my body," she says. "It's about living a life of gratitude and self-acceptance."

Toni, who transformed her life to keep the disease at bay, now lives near Byron Bay and hosts yoga workshops around Australia. "Giving thanks is a big part of our sessions," she says.



GIVING THANKS

1. Share gratitude photographs on social media with the hashtag #capturinggratitude.
2. Start your own journal, with thoughts, drawings and photos to remind yourself of what you're grateful for.
3. At the dinner table, ask each family member to name something for which they are thankful.
4. Start a gratitude tree with your children. Visit www.wallitude.com.au.
5. Send cards or letters to friends and family, thanking them for gifts, experiences or just being part of your life.